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HB 4795



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Thank you very much for the opportunity to speak to you today regarding HB 4795. And thank you for serving people of Michigan. I am Dr. Linda Brundage, a mom, grandma, psychologist and person of faith. Since Dec. 2012, I have been a gun violence prevention advocate. I am currently the executive director of the MICHIGAN COALITION TO PREVENT GUN VIOLENCE. Our mission statement is " We are a grassroots organization working toward the prevention of gun violence through community education and stronger gun laws" The Michigan Coalition currently represents the following groups from around the state.

Immaculate Heart of Mary, Peace, Justice, Sustainability;

Michigan Unitarian Universalist Social Justice Network;

Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, Detroit;

Peace Education Center;

Greater Lansing Network Against War and Injustice;

Fellowship for Today;

Citizens for Peace;

Battle Creek Voices for Peace;

Brady Campaign, MI;

Million Mom March, MI;

Greater Lansing United Nations Association;

Mothers Against Street Killings;

Unitarian Universalist Church of Greater Lansing, Social Action Committee;

Michigan Peace Team;

Coalition for Common Ground;

The Greater Lansing Clergy Forum;

Michigan Education Association;

American Federation of Teachers, MI;

Physicians to Prevent Gun Violence

Safe Places Alliance

I want to contextualize for you the work we are all trying to do here. I would like to presume that everyone in this room can agree that the United States has a monumental problem with gun violence.

Too often these discussions are filled with numbers and statistics. I want us to have to consider what we are really talking about. My friend Sandy who lost her daughter at the Aurora Theater shooting, wrote these words 3 YEARS after the death of Jessi when she was finally able to view autopsy diagrams of her child. "I knew, of course, about the six gunshot wounds that killed her, about the armor-piercing bullet that slammed into her head. But I did not know the details. I felt it was time to know. On the autopsy, my husband and I didn't look at the photographs. We looked at a diagram of what was done to my beautiful daughter's tiny body. Her right leg was ripped apart and rammed into her left leg. Her abdomen received four bullets and additional fragments. Fragments were lodged in her right wrist and other places. Her left clavicle was broken by a bullet. In her head, a bullet left a five-inch hole. The bullet entered through her left eye, ripping apart her brain.

I read a bit of Sandy's story to try to humanize what we are talking about here. It communicates some of the pain of gun violence .

I also want you to know breadth of the problem.

Americans are much, much more likely to be killed by guns than people in other countries. When nine people are gunned down [at an Oregon community college](#), or 14 people fatally shot at [a holiday party in California](#), or nine parishioners killed at [a church in Charleston](#), the world pays attention. These bursts of violence are terrifying and specific, but we also must consider the daily grinding deaths in our cities and villages that make up the pervasive background noise of gun violence in America. The gun homicide rate in the United States was more than **25 times** higher than in other high-income countries, according to a [new study](#) in the American Journal of Medicine. This divide was particularly acute for young people. The gun homicide rate for Americans between the ages of 15 and 24 is an astronomical **49 times** higher than it is for people that age in other, comparable countries. The rate of unintentional deaths involving guns was also more than **six times** higher here.

Grinshteyn, University of Nevada and Hemenway, Harvard School of Public Health wrote that their research showed a country with “an enormous firearm problem.”

According to the new study comparing the United States to other countries, suicides involving guns were also a much bigger issue here than elsewhere. The CDC reports that two out of three gun deaths in the United States are suicides. And this new study shows that the rate of suicides involving guns was **eight times** higher in the United States than other countries.

The conclusion of the study by these esteemed researchers : “These results are consistent with the hypothesis that our firearms are killing us rather than

protecting us.” Thank you to Mark Berman of the Washington Post for these horrifying numbers published Feb. 3.

In 2011 in Michigan gun deaths exceeded deaths from motor vehicles.

Thank you for bearing with me as I try to describe the gun culture in the United States. This epidemic is what we as families of Michigan should be trying to change. We should not be spending our time on legislation like HB 4795 that penalizes municipalities and people who are elected to those municipalities or who work in our cities and towns for doing their jobs.

This bill would allow extreme gun groups, many from out-of-state, to attack small towns and local taxpayers by filing lawsuits against local officials who are just trying to protect children and others in their communities. Local governments are already struggling to pay for basic services, as we have seen so starkly in Flint, so the last thing we need is the radical gun lobby running roughshod over our communities’ elected leaders and public coffers.

HB 4795, could force local governments and individual local officials to pay the gun lobby thousands of dollars for trying to protect residents from gun violence. The bill would allow groups like the National Rifle Association, and individual Michigan residents, to bring lawsuits against local governments and officials for damages and fines.

HB 4795 is clearly a gun lobby driven bill that really seems frivolous since Michigan has clear redress in our court systems for any violations of PA 319 or PA 29.

We need to work with our representatives to make our communities safer — not turn them into lawsuit playgrounds for the NRA. WE should in fact be here today discussing repeal of PA 319 and PA 29 not thinking about how we must penalize officials and employees for doing their jobs. Why would Michiganders who love freedom, not retain power for their communities?

We have a tragic and preventable gun violence epidemic across this country and it's deplorable that our state legislature is even considering this bill when there's a desperate need to pass common sense laws to protect our health and safety, including responsible gun safety laws.

Thank you for your time. Please vote no on HB 4795 and thank you again for looking out for the best interests of the citizens of Michigan.